

REMARKS

This paper responds to the Office Action dated May 20, 2003. Forms PTO-2038 and PTO/SB/22 are attached.

Drawings. The Examiner expresses the view that items 124 in Figs. 2 and 4 are different. It is respectfully suggested that the Examiner is in error on this point. Item 124 is identical in Figs. 2 and 4, differing only in the view. In Fig. 2 it is seen from above, and in Fig. 4 it is seen from below. No change or correction to the drawings is required. It appears to the undersigned that the Examiner's real complaint is that where the "rail 124" is mentioned in the specification, it sometimes says "bottom rail 124" and other times says merely "rail 124". If this is the real complaint, the Examiner is requested to inform the undersigned and the undersigned will amend the specification to add the word "bottom" every time that the rail 124 is mentioned.

Claim objections. The Examiner notes a problem regarding antecedent basis in claims 5, 7, 10 and 11. Each of these claims has been amended to move the offending phrase to a later location in the claim so as to remedy the problem. The undersigned is grateful to the Examiner for pointing out this problem.

The Examiner asks whether "the second location" should read "the fourth location." The undersigned responds that the references to first, second, third, and fourth locations were carefully drafted to refer to four distinct locations. Any reference that would supposedly anticipate one of the apparatus claims would need to have four such locations satisfying the various structural relationships cited between the locations and other recited structure. Any reference that would supposedly anticipate one of the method claims would need to have four such locations satisfying the various time-sequence relationships recited in the method steps.

Art rejection. The Examiner rejects all claims, and each rejection depends upon a US Pat. No. 6,282,087 to Gibbons et al. ("Gibbons"). The Examiner refers to Fig. 4 of Gibbons and

expresses the view that features 216 are somehow barriers to insertion of a carrier.

The Examiner is requested to reconsider this view. In Gibbons, the features 216 are not barriers at all but are expressly shaped to permit insertion of a carrier and to guide the carrier during its insertion. They never block insertion of a carrier. For this reason it is requested that the rejection in view of Gibbons be withdrawn.

Claims 5, 7 and 10-11 are method claims, each having several steps. The steps make specific limiting reference to first, second, third, and fourth positions. It is requested that the Examiner point out where in Gibbons the first, second, third, and fourth positions may be found, for example by means of a marked-up Fig. 4 explaining where these may supposedly be found. Failing this, it is requested that the rejection of claims 5, 7, and 10-11 be withdrawn.

The comments above appear to overcome the cited reference, and allowance is requested at this time. If the Examiner does not find the claims allowable even after this amendment, the undersigned would welcome an opportunity to discuss the application with the Examiner so as to address any issues that the Examiner may feel to remain at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



Carl Oppedahl
PTO Reg. No. 32,746
Oppedahl & Larson LLP
P O Box 5068
Dillon, CO 80435-5068
telephone 970-468-6600
email oppedahl@patents.com